

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 19, 2007

Senator Barack Obama  
Obama for America  
PO Box 8102  
Chicago, Illinois 60680

Dear Senator Obama:

As a presidential candidate, you are in a unique position of holding an ongoing, open dialogue with the American people. But as we reviewed the issues candidates are discussing on the campaign trail, we have noticed that candidates are reluctant—perhaps understandably—to talk frankly about our nation's long-term fiscal challenges. Indeed, many campaign platforms on entitlement spending assume our country can continue to borrow hundreds of billions of dollars annually from the Social Security trust fund, just as previous administrations have done. Those days are over.

This week, the first baby boomer signed up for her promised Social Security benefits, and just last month, the nation's debt topped \$9 trillion for the first time. Sadly, few of our current political leaders are planning for America's long-term financial future. The next president will not have that luxury. If you are elected, during your administration 78 million baby boomers will become eligible for Medicare (2011) and Social Security (2012) benefits, fully opening the spigots of entitlement spending. America will eventually be forced to take on so much debt that interest payments alone outsize all other non-defense spending.

Even in the near term, the consequences of ballooning mandatory spending are far-reaching. What will our next president do when discretionary funds for medical research, education, transportation, defense research and development, health care and other vital programs run out? The slow collapse of Medicare, Social Security, and other entitlement programs threatens to cut every senior's benefits, raise every worker's payroll taxes, and bankrupt America—and it will all occur on the next president's watch. We want to help you avoid this national nightmare.

We write today to let you know that if you win, we have the perfect gift for you. It's a lasting solution to the long-term spending problem—the biggest you will face as president. But we need your help and the help of all the candidates to make sure it arrives in time for your first days in the White House. The bipartisan Cooper-Wolf SAFE Commission Act (H.R. 3654) could literally save our nation from bankruptcy by forcing Congress to vote up or down on a variety of long-term spending reform proposals. The SAFE Commission would be balanced between eight Republicans and eight Democrats, and it would include the Secretary of Treasury, the Director of OMB, four members of Congress, and others with economic expertise.

Mandating congressional action is what makes the SAFE Commission unique. It will force Congress to take up this problem, and it will explicitly put all options on the table. After a year of

study and hearings, the commission will propose a solution that brings spending and revenues into balance over the long term. Then, Congressional leaders of both parties, as well as the president, will have opportunities to bring their own proposals up for consideration. We believe you will be thankful that the wheels of bipartisan consensus are already in motion when you take office.

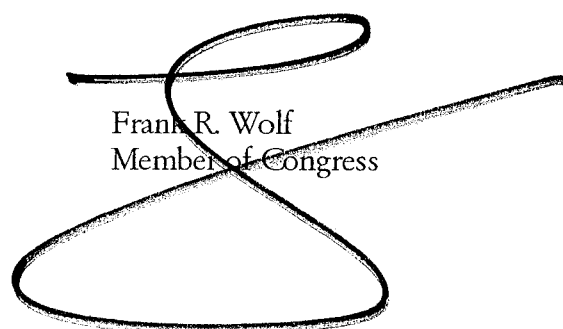
By running for president in 2008 you have volunteered to stop the treacherous decline in U.S. financial strength. The American people deserve to know the extent of the financial straits we face. It will be your job to stem the tide, and we believe this commission is the answer.

We've enclosed material that shows support from both ends of the political spectrum. Please support prompt passage of the Cooper-Wolf bill so that the commission can report back in time. You shouldn't confuse support for the commission with support for any of its proposals. You can oppose all of its recommendations, but creation of the commission is a matter of prudent planning. Our gift is not just for you, but for America. It's a life raft that's big enough for all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Cooper".

Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank R. Wolf".

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress